

**Media Relations Guide for  
Neighborhood Networks Grand  
Openings**

Dear Neighborhood Networks Staff:

Many of you have sought advice and assistance in increasing public awareness of your local Neighborhood Networks centers. It is my pleasure to introduce this updated *Media Relations Guide for Neighborhood Networks Grand Openings*.

We hope the information in this basic resource guide provides you with useful instructions on how to plan and conduct effective public information campaigns for Neighborhood Networks center grand openings. With this manual, we want to encourage Neighborhood Networks staff to become active participants in developing relationships with local media.

Nationwide, grand opening ceremonies for new Neighborhood Networks centers have generated significant electronic and print media coverage. I have seen firsthand the value positive media coverage can have in informing potential partners and community participants about the many resources and services provided by a Neighborhood Networks center.

This guide is divided into small sections that cover a wide range of areas you will need to address in planning an effective media campaign. It provides tips on how to write a news release, develop a media distribution list, get media attention, and more. We have also provided you with many easy-to-follow examples that you and your staff can use.

Later, we may expand this basic instruction to include more comprehensive media relations guidance. Please feel free to provide comments and suggestions for future topics. Best of luck and I look forward to seeing many of you at future grand openings.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Delores A. Pruden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Delores A. Pruden  
Director, Neighborhood Networks  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

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This publication was developed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to assist in the planning and development of Neighborhood Networks centers.

The guides in this series offer “how to” information on starting a center, creating programs and identifying center partners, marketing and media outreach, sustainability, funding, and much more.

Neighborhood Networks is a community-based program established by HUD in 1995. Since then, more than 1,000 centers have opened throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. These community learning centers provide residents of HUD insured and assisted properties with programs, activities and training promoting economic self-sufficiency.

This guide was published in 2002.

To receive copies of this publication or any others in the series, contact:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Neighborhood Networks  
2277 Research Boulevard, 5J  
Rockville, MD 20850

Neighborhood Networks Information Center  
Toll-free (888) 312-2743  
E-mail: *neighborhoodnetworks@hud.gov*  
TTY: (800) 483-2209

All publications are available from the Neighborhood Networks Web site at *www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org*

# *Importance of Holding a Grand Opening*

## **Section 1. Why a Grand Opening Is a Great Marketing Outreach Tool for Attracting New Partners and Volunteers**

A grand opening event is the perfect way to open your doors to the community. Many successful Neighborhood Networks centers have held a grand opening event; it is an effective way to create early marketing opportunities and to attract new partners, donations, and volunteers.

Think of a grand opening event as a building block for your center. It can build resources, visibility, participation, productivity, and morale. A grand opening event can:

### **Grand Opening Tip**

Contact the Neighborhood Networks Information Center at (888) 312-2743 to receive a Certificate of Achievement, which can be presented during a grand opening event.

- Build interest and excitement among residents about your center's programs, and also increase participation.
- Attract local partners and publicly thank those already involved.
- Educate community leaders about your center's accomplishments and foster partnerships with them.
- Educate the community about your center and its programs.
- Affirm your center's place within the family of Neighborhood Networks centers.

In addition, a grand opening gives you an opportunity to say thanks to the property owners, managers, partners, and individuals who have made your grand opening possible.

While the task of planning a special event can seem overwhelming, remember that the grand opening does not have to be complicated to be

successful. Good planning and a few volunteers can ensure a successful event.

**News really does travel fast.** Through local print and broadcast media coverage, the news about your Neighborhood Networks center can reach thousands of people quickly. And results of good media coverage can go far.

In St. Louis, Detroit, Portland, Houston, and many other cities nationwide, local media coverage has helped to increase local interest in partnership development with Neighborhood Networks centers.

**Who can you reach?** Through media coverage and invitations to your grand opening event, you can gain many benefits and reach several important audiences, such as:

- **Community decisionmakers.** Many decisionmakers in the community, who are great potential partners and advocates, read the newspapers, watch the news, and listen to the radio to stay informed about local events and issues.
- **Local businesses that hire trained workers.** Many local businesses are eager to hire computer-trained employees and may be willing to provide customized training at your center.
- **Potential volunteers.** Holding a grand opening is also a great way to attract potential volunteers. Many local college interns and volunteers who may be interested in teaching computer classes often hear about opportunities through marketing outreach efforts. Other professionals in the community might be willing to share their talents, but you have to get the word out.

- **Nonprofits and businesses interested in senior-oriented centers.** For senior-oriented centers, grand opening media coverage can spark interest from local nonprofits and businesses that may support your center. Many senior and youth groups are interested in working together in mentoring programs and might learn about your services through news coverage or marketing outreach.

Clearly, the payoff for conducting a grand opening is worth the effort.

# ***Conducting Successful Grand Openings***

## **Section 2. Easy Four-Step Process for Generating Media Coverage Through a Grand Opening: A Quick Review**

### **The Publicity Campaign**

A well-conceived, strategic, and integrated publicity campaign is essential to achieving the goals of your grand opening event. Even the best-planned event cannot be successful unless the audiences you want to reach hear about it. Developing effective relationships with all of your many audiences, such as residents, community leaders, partners, and others, can provide long-term benefits to your center.

A successful publicity plan includes outreach to the media to increase event visibility and maximize exposure of your center. Through local print and broadcast media coverage, the news about your grand opening event can reach thousands of people quickly.

Media attention can provide:

- Credibility for your message/event that cannot be obtained through expensive advertising.
- The opportunity to reach people who may wish to attend your event or participate in your center's program.
- The opportunity to attract new partners and supporters.

Through media coverage and invitations to your grand opening event, you can gain many benefits and reach several important audiences, such as:

- **Community decisionmakers.** Many decisionmakers in the community, who are great potential partners and advocates, read the newspapers, watch the news, and listen to the radio to stay informed about local events and issues.

- **Local businesses that hire trained workers.** Many local businesses are eager to hire computer-trained employees and may be willing to provide customized training at your center.
- **Potential volunteers.** Holding a grand opening is also a great way to attract potential volunteers. Many local college interns and volunteers who may be interested in teaching computer classes often hear about opportunities through marketing outreach efforts. Other professionals in the community might be willing to share their talents, but you have to get the word out.
- **Nonprofits and businesses interested in senior-oriented centers.** For senior-oriented centers, grand opening media coverage can spark interest from local nonprofits and businesses that may support your center. Many senior and youth groups are interested in working together in mentoring programs and might hear about your services through news coverage or marketing outreach.

Here are some other publicity tactics to consider:

- Take advantage of bulletin boards throughout the community where you can publicize your Grand Opening for free. Arrange to post materials such as posters, brochures, and flyers promoting your center and its event at local libraries, grocery stores, malls, or other public places.
- Write a news release or media advisory for your local newspapers and radio and television stations. It is suggested that you submit the draft media advisory to your local HUD Field Office, which will assist you.

- Ask local print and broadcast media to provide in-kind publicity.

Note: Translate materials into other languages, as appropriate, to reach your community's minority and ethnic populations.

### Five Easy Steps to Media Coverage

This simple five-step strategy guides you through the process of informing the media about an event.

**Step One.** Develop a media contact list that includes local radio and television stations, and daily and weekly newspapers.

It's easy! All you need are some names and telephone numbers of local media organizations and contacts, which can be found in a phone directory or on the Internet.

- Identify all local media sources, including radio, cable, and television stations; weekly and daily newspapers; magazines; and wire services, such as the Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI); and call for contact information for their news department. Do not forget to include reporters from alternative, ethnic, and community newspapers, and local cable stations.

Your local HUD Field Office may have a list already available, but the telephone book and the Internet will help with the majority of the contact information.

**Step Two.** Prepare a media advisory or news release with information about your event. (See the samples provided in sections 7A and 8A). The media advisory provides reporters with early notification of the event, while the press release offers more details. Both materials must be sharp and to the point, so that the media can relay their news content to audiences easily, with confidence in their accuracy. A news release faces intense competition when it arrives on an editor's desk. To generate media interest, communicate the news of the event in a way that makes it fascinating and worthy of being reported. News releases are purveyors of information, and nothing is more important to local media than resources

and programs that are doing something worthwhile for the community.

It is good practice to send the press release 2 to 3 days prior to the date of your event, but please be aware of local media deadlines, as they may vary.

**Step Three.** Fax or e-mail the media advisory to the contacts on the distribution list. Sending a fax or e-mail is the fastest, most effective way to send information to your contacts. If there is time, follow up the distribution of press materials with phone calls. Do not beg, or demand that a reporter attend, just take a minute or two to make your pitch.

- When sending a fax, remember to include a fax cover sheet. It should include the contact name, title, news organization and fax number, the name of your center, your name and number, and a brief description of the event. This presents another opportunity to sell your story. Use a crisp, punchy sentence to highlight why an editor or reporter should attend the event.

**Step Four.** Respond to any media inquiries about the center or about the information you provided.

**Step Five.** Assemble and distribute press kits. A press kit should tell the media about the center and why the event is important. Good items to include are:

- The news release about the event.
- The Neighborhood Networks brochure.\*\*
- Neighborhood Networks fact sheets.\*\*
- Photographs of your center and staff.
- Copies of articles that have been written about your center.
- Neighborhood Networks and center newsletters.\*\*
- Copies of certificates of commendation or other honors the center has received.



- Biographies of speakers appearing at the celebration and profiles of the organizations they represent.
- A Neighborhood Networks cover folder.\*\*

\*\*—Items marked with asterisks are available from the Neighborhood Networks Information Center.

## Section 3. Suggested Timeline for a Grand Opening Event

### Three Weeks Before the Event

- Develop event schedule.
- Arrange for podium, seating, decorations, and so on. (See section 4, *How Do I Plan a Grand Opening Event?*)

### Two to Three Weeks Before the Event

- Confirm as many speakers as possible. (See section 4.)

### Ten to Twelve Days Before the Event

- Prepare or update your media list. (See section 6, *Developing a Good Media Distribution List*.)

### Eight to Nine Days Before the Event

- Complete the media advisory. (See section 7, *Preparing the Media Advisory*.)
- Begin writing the news release. (See section 8, *Preparing an Effective News Release*.)

### Six to Seven Days Before the Event

- Fax/mail media advisory. (See section 9, *Distributing the News Release and Media Advisory*.)
- Call media to confirm receipt and pitch story if time permits. (See section 5, *How Do I Get Media Interested In Our Grand Opening Event?*)

### Two to Three Days Before the Event

- Complete and fax the news release.
- Call the local AP bureau to put event on the daybook.

### Day of Event

- Set up and hold event. Setup can also be done the evening before the event. (See section 4.)
- Respond to media inquiries. (See section 10, *Tips for Working With Reporters*.)
- Do followup calls to media if time permits. (See section 5.)

### Post-Event

- Monitor for media coverage. (See section 11, *Monitoring Your Media Coverage*.)
- Respond to media inquiries. (See section 10.)

## Section 4. How Do I Plan a Grand Opening Event?

A Neighborhood Networks center grand opening is similar to a store's grand opening: you want the community to know that you are open for business. One way to generate interest is to stage an event at your center. You can invite community members, local officials, business leaders, and journalists. Planning a successful event is not complicated. You simply need time and a little creativity.

### Setting a Date

It is important to consider two factors when deciding on a grand opening date:

- **Be aware of possible date conflicts.** Make sure your event does not compete with media deadlines or other planned local or national news events that may grab media attention. You are more likely to attract media attention if you hold an event between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. weekdays. Evenings are not recommended unless you have a strong speaker or exciting news attraction.

#### Media Tip

You might consider providing a refreshments table for the speakers, media, and guests that attend your grand opening.

- **Allow time to prepare.** Like any event, a grand opening takes time to plan. Try to allow between 3 and 4 weeks before the event to prepare your program.

### Working With Speakers

- **Invite speakers 2 to 3 weeks before the event.** After you set the grand opening date, you can begin inviting speakers by letter, by telephone, or in person. Try to confirm speakers' attendance at least 1 week before the event. You may need more time for high-profile individuals.

- **Select high-profile speakers.** Consider inviting the mayor, local elected officials, HUD representatives, a sports figure, a celebrity, or a well-known community activist. Invite residents who have an interesting story to share. Do not forget important partners or other supporters of your center. To keep your program short and interesting, try to schedule no more than five to six speakers. A suggested time limit for a grand opening event is 30 to 45 minutes

#### Media Tip

If you plan to hold part or all of your grand opening ceremony outside, remember to develop an alternative plan in case of bad weather.

- **Remember your audience's attention span.** Vary the program while keeping it short. It is best to keep speaker times to no more than 10 minutes each.

### Arranging Important Details

- **Develop an event schedule.** The program agenda distributed at your grand opening should list speakers, topics, and times.
- **Make sure all names are spelled correctly.** Use speaker's titles.
- **Try to get biographies of speakers and profiles of their organizations.** Make arrangements in advance for a podium, microphones, seating, decorations, and props such as signs, banners, ribbons, and scissors.
- **Most of all, have fun!** This is your chance to show the public and the media how your Neighborhood Networks center works with and for the community.

## Section 4A. Checklist for Planning a Grand Opening Event

The checklist below provides a quick guide on the necessary steps to hold a successful grand opening. All the activities outlined are discussed in this manual.

- **Pick a good date:** See section 4, *How Do I Plan A Grand Opening Event?*

- **Reserve space for your event:** See section 4.

- **Secure a podium, seating, and decorations:** See section 4.

- **Confirm as many speakers as possible:** See section 4.

- **Prepare a local media list:** See section 6, *Developing a Good Media List*.

- **Write/distribute a media advisory:** See section 7, *Preparing a Media Advisory*, and

**Media Tip**

Try to be realistic in your planning. Keep in mind your budget, time, and goals.

**Media Tip**

Grand openings provide great photo opportunities. Bring your camera if you have one. You can send event photos to the local media.

section 9, *Distributing the News Release and Media Advisory*.

- **Write/distribute news release:** See section 8, *Preparing an Effective News Release*, and section 9, *Distributing the News Release and Media Advisory*.

- **Make followup calls to media if time permits:** See section 5, *How Do I Get Media Interested in Our Grand Opening Event?*

- **Call the local AP Daybook to put the event on the calendar:** See Media Tip in section 5.

- **Set up your event the day before:** See section 4.

- **Hold the event:** See section 4.

- **Respond to media inquiries:** See section 10, *Tips for Working With Reporters*.

- **Monitor your coverage:** See section 11, *Monitoring Your Media Coverage*.

## Section 5. How Do I Get Media Interested in Our Grand Opening Event?

### Sample Media Advisory



Nothing is more important than the message that you are doing something worthwhile for the community. If the event is newsworthy, reporters will show interest.

**The basics.** It is best to send out both a media advisory and a news release. These are popular media relations tools that tell reporters all the essential background information: the who, what, when, where, and why? Media advisories and news releases are discussed in more detail in sections 7 and 8.

### Sample News Release



If you are pressed for time and must choose only one communications tool, send a news release about 2 or 3 days before the event. Both media advisories and news releases inform news organizations about your grand opening. It is important to understand the difference between a media advisory and a news release.

An advisory is an invitation or a “heads-up” for the media, which you send no more than a week before your event. In contrast, a news release tells your story in greater detail and is sent after the media advisory. (See section 8.)

To generate media interest, you should communicate the news of your grand opening in a way that makes it newsworthy and interesting to reporters and to the readers, viewers, or listeners they serve. Identify appropriate media contacts and ensure that they hear or read about your upcoming event.

Depending on the news of the day and conflicting deadlines, news organizations may decide not to attend your grand opening event. In that case, a news release provides reporters with context and detail to do a followup story. Many Neighborhood Networks stories are covered this way by both print and electronic media.

**Beyond the basics.** If you have time, follow up the distribution of media materials with phone calls. Sometimes materials get lost or are not directed to the right reporter or editor, especially in large news organizations. A phone call adds a personal touch, but be careful not to demand that a journalist attend your event. Briefly try to sell or pitch your story to the editor/reporter.

**Media Tip**

One or two days before your event, call your local AP bureau to put your event on the daybook, a log which reporters read for potential news stories.

**Getting high-profile speakers.** Of course one of the best ways to make your event more interesting to reporters is to have high-profile speakers, such as local government officials, community stakeholders, key partners, and celebrities. Reporters like to cover newsworthy personalities and officials.

# Working With Media

## Section 6. Developing a Good Media Distribution List

If you want to get the best possible media turnout at your grand opening event, you should develop and maintain an updated media distribution list.

You can develop your own list, or you may contact your local HUD public affairs office or the Neighborhood Networks media relations/communications team to see if a media list for your area is already available. (See sections 12 and 13 for more information.) If you develop your own media list, the process is simple:

- Identify all local media sources, including radio, cable, and television stations; weekly and daily newspapers; magazines; and wire services, such as AP and UPI. Not all areas have a local AP or UPI bureau.

Most larger towns and cities have at least one daily newspaper and three television stations, usually ABC, NBC, and CBS affiliates. Some cities and towns also have a FOX television station. Do not forget radio, cable, magazines, and weekly newspapers, which traditionally cover community events. Include all ethnic and religious media and public or community affairs programs that serve your local community.

- Check a telephone book or do an Internet search for a media list for your area. If you have access to the Internet, you can do a specific search for media organizations in your area. (For example, if you were in San Diego, using a typical Web browser, you could type in “San Diego Media” in the

### Media Tip

If you need to, check with the Neighborhood Networks communications team for help with a media list for your area. Call the team at (888) 312-2743.

search box.) If a list is available, you can print it out directly from your search. Once you have obtained local phone numbers for media outlets, you can start building your own list.

- Call local radio and television stations and ask for the news department. Ask the news department to provide you with the name, phone number, fax number, and mailing address of the assignment editor/reporter for your area. If possible, you might want to introduce yourself to that editor/reporter while you are on the line.
- Type your contact information into your computer at the center. If possible, use a software program that prints mailing labels.
- Update your mailing list. Since newsroom staffing constantly changes, it is a good idea to update your media list at least every 6 months by making a quick round of phone calls. Add new names and contact information as needed.
- Make a separate mailing list that includes local officials, partners, and community stakeholders. It is important to keep these groups abreast of the latest news about your center.

### *Did you know in the United States, there are:*

- More than 1,450 daily and 8,100 weekly newspapers.
- About 1,680 television stations.
- About 11,000 AM and FM radio stations.

A partial sample of a media list for San Francisco is shown in section 6A.

## Section 6A. Sample Media List: Partial San Francisco Media List

### Daily Newspapers

San Francisco Chronicle  
901 Mission Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
Contact: Richard Holding, Assignment Editor  
Phone: (415) 777-6050  
Fax: (415) 543-2482

San Francisco Examiner  
110 Fifth Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103-2918  
Contact: Sharon Rosenhouse, Managing Editor  
Phone: (415) 777-2424  
Fax: (415) 777-2525

### Weekly Newspapers

San Francisco Independent  
1201 Evans Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94124-1717  
Contact: Zoran Basisch, Managing Editor  
Phone: (415) 826-1100  
Fax: (415) 826-5371

San Francisco Weekly  
425 Brannon Street  
San Francisco, CA 94107-1715  
Contact: Heather Weisner  
Phone: (415) 541-0700  
Fax: (415) 777-1839

### Wire Services

Associated Press  
P.O. Box 7247  
San Francisco, CA 94102-7247  
Contact: Mo Johnson, Assignment Editor  
Phone: (415) 621-7432  
Fax: (415) 552-9430

### Magazines

San Francisco Business Journal  
275 Battery, Suite 940  
San Francisco, CA 94111-3305  
Contact: Michael Consol, Editor  
Phone: (415) 984-2522  
Fax: (415) 398-2494

### Television Stations

KGO-TV (Channel 7) (ABC)  
900 North Front Street  
San Francisco, CA 94111-1450  
Contact: Margaret Poindexter, Assignment Editor  
Phone: (415) 954-7777  
Fax: (415) 956-6402

KPIX-TV (Channel 5) (CBS)  
855 Battery Street  
San Francisco, CA 94111-1503  
Contact: Al Corral, Assignment Editor  
Phone: (415) 362-5550  
Fax: (415) 765-8994

### Radio Stations

KABL AM/FM  
1025 Battery Street  
San Francisco, CA 94111-1201  
Contact: Mike Drive, News Director  
Phone: (415) 788-5225  
Fax: (415) 788-9812

This is a sample media list only and does not include all news organizations for the San Francisco area.
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## Section 7. Preparing Your Media Advisory

As we learned in section 5, a media advisory can be an effective tool to increase media attendance at your grand opening. A media advisory serves as an invitation for media to attend the event. While they are simple and short, media advisories are designed to spark a reporter's interest so that he or she will want to attend the event.

A media advisory is a brief overview that includes dates, times, and scheduled speakers for an event. (See the next page for a sample).

A media advisory should also pique a reporter's interest so that he or she will want to attend the event to find out more about your Neighborhood Networks center.

### Media Tip

When you are issuing media advisories and news releases for grand openings, contact a local HUD public affairs representative who can provide expert guidance and assistance. See section 13 for more guidance.

### Media Advisories

Some key points to remember:

- Keep it simple and short. Media advisories are usually less than one page.
- Include one-line descriptions explaining what the event is about, where and when it will be held, who is involved, and why you are holding the event.
- Add one or two brief paragraphs that further explain the background, or the "why."
- Remember to write a headline and include contact information.
- Fax or mail the advisory to media 6 or 7 days before the event.

Include the HUD Neighborhood Networks Web site address ([www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org)) and the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free number (888) 312-2743.

## Section 7A. Sample Media Advisory

### **MEDIA ADVISORY**

Bay Ridge Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center  
One Bens Drive  
Annapolis, MD 21403

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**For Immediate Release**

August 9, 2002

**Contact**

Mr. Kenny Hart (410) xxx-xxxx

***Annapolis Neighborhood Networks Center Holds Open House***

What: Community Open House

Where: Bay Ridge Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center  
One Bens Drive  
Annapolis, MD 21403

When: August 13, 2002, from 1 to 4 p.m.

Who: Kenny Hart, center coordinator

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**ANNAPOLIS, MD**—As part of its Neighborhood Networks Week activities, the Bay Ridge Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center, located at One Bens Drive in Annapolis, Maryland, will host an Open House from 1 to 4 p.m. on Tuesday, August 13, 2002. Bay Ridge Apartments invites local residents, potential and existing supporters and partners, and the media to visit the center as it showcases its programs in action.

The Bay Ridge Neighborhood Networks Center is part of a group of more than 1,000 Neighborhood Networks centers that have opened nationwide. Launched by HUD in September 1995, Neighborhood Networks is a community-based program that provides residents of HUD insured and assisted housing with onsite access to computer technology, resources, and job-training skills as a vehicle to self-sufficiency.

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Additional information is available from the HUD Neighborhood Networks Web site at [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org) or by calling the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free at (888) 312-2743.

## Section 8. Preparing an Effective News Release

Sending a news release is the most cost-effective way to alert the media about a news event such as a grand opening. News releases should be typed or reproduced on standard-size paper, or you may use a news release template available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site. (See section 8A for a sample of an actual news release.)

When you are writing a news release, it is important to answer five key questions about your grand opening event: who, what, when, where and why. Of course you don't have to answer all these questions at once. Try to keep your news release to no more than two double-spaced typed pages. Your release should contain the following:

**Release Date.** This should preferably appear on the left side of the release below the address and should contain the date on which you are releasing the information.

**For Immediate Release**  
June 1, 2003

**Contact.** The contact(s) should appear on the right side of the release and should list the person(s) whom you want reporters to call and a phone number. A news release issued by a HUD office should include a local HUD public affairs representative or Neighborhood Networks coordinator as a contact since they know about Neighborhood Networks and have experience working with media.

**Contact**  
John Smith (301) 000-0000

**Dateline.** Datelines tell the media where your event will be held. A dateline should contain the city name, in **BOLD CAPITAL LETTERS**, where your grand opening will occur, followed in most cases by the state. No state is needed for major cities. Use post office abbreviations for states.

### Write Headlines That Grab

The headline is the most important element of your news release. Your headline should grab the reporter's attention immediately. An ideal headline should summarize what your event is all about in less than 10 words and in a maximum of two lines.

### Subheads Help, Too

You may also write a subhead that supports the headline. The subhead allows you to provide additional information without going into great detail.

#### Sample Headline and Subhead

**City's First Neighborhood Networks Center to Open**  
*HUD Initiative Provides Lifelong Learning and Economic Opportunity*

### Writing the Effective Lead

Your lead or first paragraph should summarize what your news release is all about, in less than 30 words if possible. Keep your lead simple and try to use a unique news angle that sparks local interest.

### The News Release Body

The rest of the news release, known as the body, should include more detailed information. You may also use quotes to make your news release more colorful. Your entire release should be clear, concise, and informative. Use the active voice and attribute reports, statements, and facts when necessary to add credibility.

To end your release, include an end paragraph sign (#). You may also want to include your center's Web site address, if you have one, or list the HUD Neighborhood Networks Web site ([www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org)). Also, you should list the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free line: (888) 312-2743.

## Section 8A. Sample News Release

### NEWS RELEASE

Town Park Plaza North Neighborhood Networks Center  
535 NW 19th Street  
Miami, FL 33136

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**For Immediate Release**

August 11, 2002

**Contact**

Kris Smith (305) xxx-xxxx

***Florida Center Hosts Health Fair for the Community***

**MIAMI, FL**—In an attempt to address the health concerns of the community, the Town Park Plaza North Neighborhood Networks Center will host a community health fair on Monday, August 15, 2002, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. as part of their Neighborhood Networks Week activities.

The health fair will provide an excellent opportunity to give residents good information on health and introduce them to some of the resources available in the community. Residents will learn from medical professionals about the dangers of drinking alcohol and smoking, and local organizations will set up exhibits and workshops to inform participants about issues related to asthma, nutrition, cancer, and HIV/AIDS awareness.

Among the invited guests are the Area Health Education Center, a local organization dedicated to improving access to healthcare in rural and underserved communities; the local chapter of the National Black Leadership Institute; and the Miami Health Department.

“This community is an underserved, low-income population that does not receive the proper medical and health-related information,” said Director Kris Smith. According to Smith, 40 percent of the children living at Town Park Plaza North suffer from asthma-related symptoms.

The Town Park Plaza North Neighborhood Networks Center is part of a group of more than 1,000 Neighborhood Networks centers that have opened nationwide. Launched by HUD in September 1995, Neighborhood Networks is a community-based program that provides residents of HUD insured and assisted housing with onsite access to computer technology, resources, and job-training skills as a vehicle to self-sufficiency.

Neighborhood Networks centers nationwide offer multifamily housing residents a variety of resources such as computer training, Internet access, job-readiness support, microenterprise development, General Equivalency Degree certification, healthcare and social services, adult education classes, and youth services.

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## Section 9. Distributing the News Release and Media Advisory

Section 6 discussed how to develop a good media distribution list. We are now going to put that media list to use.

### Do I Fax or E-mail?

Whether you fax or e-mail your news release is your own decision. Generally speaking, most news organizations prefer to receive faxes.

However, an increasing number of large news organizations, such as *The New York Times*, no longer accept faxes unless they are requested by a direct contact of the newspaper. In addition, an increasing number of reporters are beginning to request news releases via e-mail. What you do depends on your available time and resources.

#### Media Tip

News organizations and reporters are increasingly receptive to e-mail news releases. Consider this when distributing press materials.

Fax or e-mail your media advisory 6 to 7 days before the event.

- Fax or e-mail your news release about 2 to 3 days before the event.

### Cover Sheets

If you fax your media materials, remember to include a cover sheet. It should include contact name, title, news organization and fax number, and a brief description of what you are faxing. This presents another opportunity for you to sell your story. Use a one-line sentence that highlights why an editor or reporter should attend your grand opening.

## Section 10. Tips for Working With Reporters

If you want to build good working relationships with reporters, there are some good basic principles you should practice:

- **Be responsive.** If reporters call, call them back, usually within an hour. Find out what reporters want and help them. Nothing irks reporters more than someone who ignores phone calls or is evasive.
- **Know the reporter's deadline.** Reporters work on deadlines and they frequently will ask for information on a tight schedule. Try to meet their deadline. Most daily newspapers have noon or 4 p.m. deadlines, while many television stations prefer to have news footage back by 3 p.m. for the 6 o'clock news and 8 p.m. for the 11 o'clock news. Some news segments can go live at anytime via satellite.
- **Honesty is the best policy.** Be sincere and never lie. Present the facts and try to make them interesting.
- **Answer directly and follow up.** If you do not know the answer to a question, tell the reporter, "I don't know the answer to that question, but I'll find out and get back to you very soon."
- **Keep your demeanor with reporters professional.** Do not say or do anything negative in the presence of a reporter that could be picked up and used in the media. Never lose your cool or argue with a media representative. Treat a reporter as you would want to be treated yourself.
- **Briefing residents and others for interviews.** Reporters will often prefer to interview residents directly. Advise residents to relax and be themselves. Let their personality and experiences come out in the interview. Give some thought in advance to the questions that might be asked.
- **Keep your message simple.** Your comments to reporters should be brief, to the point, and easily understood. Avoid long rambling answers. Have key talking points and messages ready.
- **Use anecdotes and success stories.** People love stories and they are likely to remember them longer than they remember mere facts. With a profile or a success story, you can present a strong message. By telling a story, you will appear warmer and down-to-earth.
- **Do not demand and never beg.** Respect the reporter's opinion and do not tell him or her what is or is not news. You can suggest a news story and its importance to the listening, viewing, or reading audience, but do not push it. Do not complain about the treatment of a story as long as it is accurate and fair.
- **Dress for success.** Whether on camera or speaking with a print journalist, you want to look your best. Experts advise their clients to wear low-key interview attire. Solid colors are best. Stress eye contact and have a relaxed but professional stature. Use your hands to stress particular points, but do not become too theatrical.
- **Stay in touch.** Once you have worked with a reporter, call him or her back occasionally. Keep the media informed about what is going on at your center. Develop a lasting relationship built on respect and professional courtesy. Periodic contact will also help keep your story fresh in the reporter's mind.

## **Section 11. Monitoring Your Media Coverage**

Remember that a main purpose of holding a grand opening event is to generate media coverage. Tracking how much, if any, media coverage you obtained is easy.

You can monitor media coverage on your own by watching the television news, reading newspapers, and listening to the radio. For print stories, you may call the Neighborhood Networks media/communications team. The Neighborhood Networks toll-free number is (888) 312-2743.

For a fee (usually \$20 to \$35), audio or video tape versions of media coverage can be ordered from local television or radio stations. Newspapers also will provide copies of past issues at minimal cost.

Ask Neighborhood Networks staff to program their VCRs to record the news on several television stations on the day of your event. This saves additional costs for ordering television footage from the station.

Use your press clippings and television coverage as tools to prepare marketing packets, increase awareness about your center, recruit partners, and engage residents and community volunteers.

## Section 12. Additional Resources

### Media Resources Available Through Neighborhood Networks



If you need to, check with the Neighborhood Networks media/communications team for help with a media list for your area. Contact the team at (888) 312–2743.

Use the news release and media advisory samples included in this document as guidance for preparing your own materials.

Please visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site at [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org) for news release templates that you can use for your own media outreach.

Also, you can call the Neighborhood Networks Information Center at (888) 312–2743 to obtain copies of fact sheets, success stories, and other information about Neighborhood Networks from a national perspective.

### HUD Public Affairs Assistance

If you are with HUD and coordinating media for a Neighborhood Networks center grand opening, you should use your normal process of working with your local HUD public affairs representative.

### How to Reach the Neighborhood Networks Communications Team

When you have questions about your grand opening, please call the Neighborhood Networks media/communications team at (888) 312–2743.



# ***Neighborhood Networks Information***

For more information about Neighborhood Networks, visit the Web site at [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org) or contact the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free at (888) 312-2743, or TTY at (800) 483-2209. The Web site contains valuable information for centers including:

## **Databases**

- **Centers**  
Information about operating centers and those in planning stages. Neighborhood Networks centers across the United States are listed geographically by state.
- **News**  
Articles, press releases, success stories, and grand openings relevant to Neighborhood Networks.
- **Properties**  
Information about Neighborhood Networks properties, listed geographically by state.
- **Resources**  
Information about funding, technical assistance, publications, and Web site resources.

## **Lists**

- **Conferences**  
Calendar of conferences and training events.
- **Consortia**  
List of Neighborhood Networks consortia.
- **Coordinators**  
List of Neighborhood Networks coordinators.

- **Resident Associations**  
List of Neighborhood Networks properties with active resident associations.
- **Senior Properties**  
List of senior properties with operational Neighborhood Networks centers.

## **Online Networking**

Talk with Neighborhood Networks staff and stakeholders via online networking.

## **Publications**

- **Fact sheets.** Fact sheets are one-page summaries of various topics relevant to the operations of Neighborhood Network centers. Fact sheets currently available include an overview of the initiative, telehealth programs, health information, health partnerships, childcare, transportation, seniors, and community improvements at Neighborhood Network centers.
- **Network News** (current and past issues). A quarterly newsletter that highlights national achievements for a wide audience, including partners and the public.
- **NNewsline** (current and past issues). A quarterly newsletter that highlights topics of interest to Neighborhood Networks centers and coordinators.